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LETTER DATED 23 NOVEMBER 1998 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I should like to refer to the briefing by my Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, to the members of the Security Council on 4 November 1998, in which he reported that, in the course of his meeting with the Taliban leadership at Kandahar, he had raised the possibility of establishing a mechanism to prevent gross violations of human rights in Afghanistan. Since then, the Department of Political Affairs has been in contact with all Afghan parties concerned with a view to moving this concept forward.

I am now in a position to inform the Council that the Afghan parties have conveyed to me their agreement in principle to the deployment of civilian monitors in Afghanistan. Accordingly, with the agreement of the Council, I would intend to establish a Civil Affairs Unit within the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMA), which would initially be staffed by 12 civilian monitors, whose primary objectives would be to monitor the situation and, through their presence, seek to promote respect for minimum humanitarian standards and deter massive and systematic violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the future.

The deployment of civilian monitors would supplement the core role of UNSMA, which is to assist my Special Envoy in his peacemaking activities in Afghanistan, monitor the overall political and military situation, and maintain contacts with all Afghan factions, as well as with Governments and organizations concerned with the future of Afghanistan. The information gathered by the Civil Affairs Unit would be included in the periodic reports on the situation in Afghanistan that I regularly transmit to the Security Council and to the General Assembly.

Before seeking the formal consent of the parties to the establishment of the Civil Affairs Unit, I propose to send an assessment mission to Afghanistan, as soon as security conditions permit, in order to determine the exact mandate, composition and location of the civilian monitors.

I should be grateful if you would kindly make this letter available to the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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